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2 November 1959

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: The Berlin Situation

1. The Board discussed the Berlin situation this morning, and came to the following conclusions. Admittedly these are somewhat tentative -- not all the available evidence supports them. Nevertheless, on balance the Board believes:

(a) that the Soviets have now given up, at least for the time being, their attempt to force the West out of Berlin;

(b) that Khrushchev feels that even though he has failed to get the West out of Berlin, he has achieved various secondary aims -- namely, to loosen up the diplomatic situation, visit the US, and improve prospects for a summit conference;

(c) that Khrushchev would now like to put Berlin into the background for a while, preferably by distracting world attention on to problems of disarmament. At present

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it is not the USSR but the West, and especially the US, which is keeping the Berlin issue vigorously alive and prominently on the agenda of prospective conferences.

2. The Board believes that this quiescent phase of Soviet policy respecting Berlin is only temporary, though it may last for another year or two. The Soviets probably believe that a deepening of the Berlin crisis, in an effort to "settle" the problem now, would involve too many risks. But the Soviets will without doubt reopen the issue at some time in the fairly near future. They are almost certainly confident that their bargaining position will improve as time goes on.

ABBOT SMITH  
Acting Chairman

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